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PARLIAMENTARIANS FOR EAST TIMOR

Meeting of Parliamentarians for East Timor with UN Secretary General, Dr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, New York, February 1994. Those present, from left to right: Lord Avebury (London), Ingela Martensson (Sweden), Dr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, David Norris (Ireland) and John Langmore (Australia).

Parliamentarians for East Timor (PET) is an international organization comprised of Members of Parliament, Senators and Representatives from fifteen countries. All members support human rights for East Timor and are devoted to having their respective countries recognize East Timor's inherent right to self-determination.

PET was formed in 1988 by Tony Lamb (Member of the House of Representatives, Australia), Satsuki Eda (Member of the Japanese Diet) and Lord Avebury (United Kingdom). The organisation was created to act as an international lobbying forum to support the people of East Timor.

It is clear that parliamentarians have an important part to play in keeping the issue of East Timor on the international agenda. Hence, there is a need for coordinated action by parliamentarians from as many countries as possible.

Attached you will find the Declaration that serves as PET's founding document. You can indicate your commitment to PET's goals by signing and returning this form to PET's international secretariat as soon as possible. As a member, you will receive a bi-annual newsletter that will update you on what is happening in East Timor as well as what PET member countries are doing on the issue of East Timor.

We look forward to hearing from you.

BRIEF HISTORY OF EAST TIMOR

Settlement

Many centuries ago, successive waves of migrants, mostly Malay and Melanesian, settled on the island with the original inhabitants, that *Atoni* people of the central highlands. This ethnic mix was compounded by the arrival of Chinese, Arab and Gujerati traders, who visited Timor in search of its valuable sandalwood.

Colony

Although the Portuguese established a colonial administration in Timor in 1702, they disputed and fought with the Dutch for control over the island for the next three centuries. The two halves of the island were finally separated in an agreement signed by the two colonial powers in 1913 -- the Dutch taking the west and the Portuguese the east. The Europeans profited from their control over the sandalwood trade and introduced coffee in the mid-nineteenth century, which became Timor's principal export, supplemented with rubber, tobacco, copra and peanuts. Revolts by the Timorese against colonial rule were frequent, and most of them were suppressed brutally. The last of these continued from the late 1880s until 1912, and was defeated with the deaths of around 3,000 Timorese.

Occupation

During the Second World War Timor was occupied by the Japanese, who encountered widespread resistance to their attempts to force the population to grow food, both for their troops and for export. By the time the Japanese surrendered in 1945 some 60,000 Timorese, or 13 per cent of the population, had died. In 1949 West Timor became part of the post-colonial Indonesian Republic. Portugal retained East Timor, adding a small "legislative assembly" whose selected members were trained as an indigenous administrative elite. Economically, the Portuguese pinned their hopes on oil -- discovered in 1972, and on an expansion of tourism. An embryonic nationalist opposition emerged in the 1960s based on young people educated in Catholic schools and the Dili seminary or trained in a radicalized Portuguese army.

Independence

On April 25, 1974, the Portuguese Armed Forces Movement overthrew the Caetano regime and began a process of decolonization in Portugal's African and Asian colonies. In East Timor political groups were organized and given a free rein. In January 1974, the Timorese Democratic Union (UDT) entered a coalition with the Revolutionary Front for an Independent Timor (Fretilin). Both parties agreed with the Portuguese to move towards independence over a three-year period. The Indonesian military bribed and persuaded several UDT leaders to organize a coup in August 1975.

But by September, Fretilin was in control of virtually all of East Timor. Its leaders continued to recognize Portuguese sovereignty and called repeatedly on the Governor to return and oversee the transition to independence. Lisbon refused and Fretilin's administration became the *de facto* government. On November 28, with the Indonesian invasion imminent, Fretilin leaders declared independence, establishing the Democratic Republic of East Timor.

Invasion

On December 7, 1975, Indonesian armed forces invaded. The invasion was followed by brutal treatment of the civilian population -- indiscriminate killings and rapes in the streets of Dili, with buildings sacked and burned. This set the scene for the next twenty years of illegal occupation. To date, more than 200,000 East Timorese have died since Indonesia invaded in 1975.

Resistance

By 1979, Fretilin was almost destroyed as an organization. All its original leaders had been captured or killed, leaving behind a small group which managed during 1980 to reorganize the movement

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Members of PET agree to the following declaration:

I, the undersigned,

Recognising that the territory of East Timor has been illegally occupied by Indonesia since December 1975, inflicting extreme loss of life and destruction;

Recognising that Indonesia's policy to isolate East Timor restricts the International Committee of the Red Cross and other relief and development agents in their efforts to reach those in need, and denies the international community opportunities to assess the wishes of the people independently;

Condemning the human rights violations committed since 1975, as reported by Church leaders in East Timor and by independent human rights organisations;

Recognising that the East Timorese have been denied their right to self-determination;

Welcoming, finally, U.N. General Assembly Resolution 37/30 which asked the U.N. Secretary-General "to initiate consultations with all parties directly concerned, with a view to exploring avenues for achieving a comprehensive settlement of the problem", and acknowledging the steps which have been taken to bring Portugal and Indonesia into negotiations;

AFFIRM that negotiations will not lead to a just settlement unless they

1. Involve representatives of the East Timorese people including those who resist the present occupation,
2. Secure an end to hostilities which prevent the people of East Timor and their representatives from contributing freely to negotiations leading to self-determination,
3. Provide internationally-acceptable conditions of access to relief and development agencies and to independent visitors, journalists and diplomats, and
4. Include an act of self-determination, which is free from interference and verified by international observers acceptable to the East Timorese people,

COMMEND all international initiatives which observe these principles, and will call upon my Government to support actively a process of negotiation conducted on such terms,

AND HEREBY DECLARE myself a member of Parliamentarians for East Timor.

NAME
ADDRESS

DATE

Kindly return this by mail to: Parliamentarians for East Timor, P.O. Box 1031, Station B, Ottawa, ON K1P 5R1 CANADA

Or by fax to: 1-613-834-2021.

from the eastern tip of the island, attacking Indonesian targets in different parts of the country. Between March and August 1983, the Indonesian military and Fretilin agreed to a ceasefire, which enabled Fretilin to gain support for its position internationally and to persuade the UN Secretary-General to act as a mediator in the conflict. In August, the Indonesian Government unilaterally broke the ceasefire.

In November, 1992, Fretilin's leader, Xanana Gusmao, was captured and imprisoned. This was followed by the capture of his successor, Mau Huno, in April 1993. Currently, Fretilin retains a resistance network in the centre, south and east of the territory, but is less capable of mounting major attacks than in earlier years; yet it continues to receive wide support from the population through an underground resistance network.

United Nations

A week before the Indonesian invasion, the Portuguese Government drew the UN's attention to the Indonesian military build-up inside East Timor, already warning of the tragedy that was to befall East Timor. Five days after the invasion the General Assembly "strongly deplore[d]" Indonesia's military intervention and called on it to withdraw its troops "without delay". Each year, from 1975 through to 1982, the UN General Assembly passed a motion reaffirming East Timor's right to self-determination and calling for negotiations between Fretilin and the Indonesian and Portuguese governments. Since 1982, the motion has not been resubmitted for debate, not only because of fears that it could be defeated but also because in that year it charged the UN Secretary-General with "exploring avenues for achieving a comprehensive settlement of the problem". From then on, any return to the General Assembly was dependent upon progress being made in negotiations between "all parties directly concerned", under the auspices of the Secretary-General's office.

In December, 1975, ten days after the UN General Assembly passed its first resolution, with conditions in East Timor deteriorating rapidly, Security Council Resolution 384 unanimously called on "all States to respect the territorial integrity of East Timor" and for Indonesian troops to be withdrawn "without delay". A similar Security Council resolution was passed in 1976, with little recognition from Indonesia.

Opposition

Since the late 1980s opposition to the Indonesian occupation has shifted to younger East Timorese who have built up networks in the main towns and villages, notably Dili and Baucau. These groups organized demonstrations during the Pope's 1989 visit and for the planned visit of the Portuguese Parliamentary delegation in November 1991. When this visit was cancelled, a demonstration in Dili went ahead on November 12th. Its suppression by the military ended in the infamous Santa Cruz massacre.

Despite a deeply conservative colonial role and antipathy to Fretilin during the pre-invasion period, the Catholic Church has been increasingly critical of the military. Both the present and former Bishops of Dili -- Carlos Ximenes Belo and Martinho Costa Lopes -- have denounced torture, imprisonment and human rights abuses. Church organizations have provided basic health and education facilities, and Tetum-speaking safe havens, despite increasing opposition from the military. In January 1985 the East Timorese Council of priests called for the right of East Timor to determine its own future and referred to the Church as "being witness to a process which is slowly leading to the ethnic, cultural and religious extinction of the people of East Timor".

(Much of the above is taken from an article written by John Pilger "Simply ... A Brief History of East Timor", published in the New Internationalist, March 1994.

Parliamentarians for East Timor (PET)

Parliamentarians for East Timor
links
Members of Parliament
Representatives
Senators
from the following countries
in support of human rights
and
self-determination for East Timor.

Australia

Belgium

Canada

Finland

Ireland

Japan

Malaysia

Nepal

Netherlands

New Zealand

Norway

Philippines

Portugal

Sweden

United Kingdom

For further information, please contact:

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